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TEACHER INVOLVEMENT IN DECISIONMAKING: A STATE-BY-STATE PROFILE

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SCHOOL CONTROL: STRIKING THE BALANCE

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America's school reform movement is at a crossroads. During the past five years academic requirements have been tightened, standards have been raised, but most of the mandates for reform have been imposed, top-down, and we're beginning to discover that outside regulation has its limits. Education is a human enterprise, with teachers and students interacting with each other. There is just so much that can be accomplished by directives from above.

Tight state control promises accountability, but we cannot achieve excellence if all schools are required to meet rigidly controlled mandates that deny the individual differences of students and suppress the creativity of teachers. In the next phase of school renewal, educational leadership must be school-based.

Still, a note of caution must be struck. Granting more autonomy to schools is crucial. Such a move strengthens community participation and inspires dignity and creativity among teachers. But we cannot advocate more freedom for schools without asking "freedom to what end?"

This nation has always been ambivalent about how our public schools should be governed. On the one hand, we want local control; on the other, we want national results and we have never satisfactorily found a way to mediate the two. If the current reform movement is to succeed, we must find a middle ground.

The Carnegie Foundation recently completed the most comprehensive survey ever conducted on the conditions of teaching. We heard from more than 20,000 teachers in all 50 states about their involvement in shaping classroom and school policy. The results are not encouraging.

Teachers, we found, are not sufficiently involved in making critical decisions. They have little influence over education procedures. While most teachers help choose textbooks and shape curriculum, the majority do not help select teachers and administrators at their schools, nor are they asked to participate in such crucial matters as teacher evaluation, staff development, budget, student placement, promotion and retention policies, and standards of student conduct.

Further, teacher involvement varies dramatically from one state to another. In choosing textbooks, for example, 93 percent of teachers in Vermont say they are involved; in Maryland it's 61 percent. Participation in budget matters ranges from 57 percent in Hawaii to 8 percent in North Dakota.

Whatever is wrong with America's public schools cannot be fixed without the help of those inside the classroom. Yet in most states, teachers have been front-row spectators in a reform movement in which the signals are being called by governors, legislators, state education officials—those who are far removed from the field of action.

At the same time, schools need state and national advocates and they must be held clearly accountable for their work. Indeed, the initiative for school reform came largely from public officials, corporate leaders and concerned citizens who care deeply about the future of the nation. The movement has been sustained by these influential voices, and by the media that has constructively called for increased support for public education.

Further, we cannot ignore the fact that American schooling is a *national* concern. Students frequently move from one district to another and the future of education in one region of the country surely will affect the civic and economic future of us all. In the debate about school control we need state *and* local leadership as well.

Thus, while pushing for school-based reform, educators must define clear goals and develop procedures by which schools can demonstrate, at regular intervals, the effectiveness of their programs. Such evaluation should include the language proficiency of all students, a report on the books they read, and an assessment of the general knowledge of students in such fields as history, geography, science, math, literature and the arts.

School climate also should be measured. Are students, for example, organized into small units so that everyone is known by name? Is there, at the school, an aggressive retention program and are daily attendance and graduation rates improving? And does the school have a professional renewal plan for every teacher?

A school report card, however defined, should be submitted to district and state officials. Such reports should be accompanied by an overall evaluation prepared by the principal, teachers and parents who identify improvements as well as problems. A judgment of progress, or lack of progress, should be made—not against some arbitrary standard—but against the school's own performance in preceding years. Further, when the report card is submitted, the school should set priorities for the coming year.

In the United States with its more than 15,000 school districts, there cannot be a single national plan for improvement administered from afar through unilateral mandates. However, if excellence is to be achieved and public confidence sustained, the local school must be answerable to the public for the performance of its students. But once again, it needs more freedom and more flexibility to do the job. In the end, American education must find a way to blend local control with national results.

Above all, teachers must be full partners in the process. If we fail to give them more authority and a sense of their importance—as well as their responsibilities—we will have failed today's dedicated teachers and be unable to attract a new generation of outstanding young people to serve in the classrooms of the nation. And by that failure, we will have limited tragically the educational possibilities of our children.

TABLE 1 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: CHOOSING TEXTBOOKS AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	79%	21%
Alabama	71	29
Alaska	79	21
Arizona	78	22
Arkansas	88	12
California	74	26
Colorado	83	17
Connecticut	73	27
Delaware	84	16
Florida	64	36
Georgia	74	26
Hawaii	91	9
Idaho	83	17
Illinois	86	14
Indiana	90	10
Iowa	90	10
Kansas	90	10
Kentucky	85	15
Louisiana	63	37
Maine	89	11
Maryland	61	39
Massachusetts	76	24
Michigan	87	13
Minnesota	88	12
Mississippi	81	19
Missouri	85	15
Montana	90	10
Nebraska	87	13
Nevada	73	27
New Hampshire	79	21
New Jersey	73	27
New Mexico	88	12
New York	78	22
North Carolina	76	24
North Dakota	92	8
Ohio	84	16
Oklahoma	92	8
Oregon	87	13
Pennsylvania	84	16
Rhode Island	68	32
South Carolina	87	13
South Dakota	90	10
Tennessee	71	29
Texas	78	22
Utah	76	24
Vermont	93	7
Virginia	82	18
Washington	78	22
West Virginia	67	33
Wisconsin	87	13
Wyoming	89	11
RANGE:		
High (Vermont)	93	7
Low (Maryland)	61	39

TABLE 2 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: SHAPING THE CURRICULUM

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	**63%**	**37%**
Alabama	51	49
Alaska	68	32
Arizona	61	39
Arkansas	51	49
California	62	38
Colorado	70	30
Connecticut	68	32
Delaware	71	29
Florida	42	58
Georgia	54	46
Hawaii	69	31
Idaho	67	33
Illinois	62	38
Indiana	71	29
Iowa	75	25
Kansas	76	24
Kentucky	64	36
Louisiana	40	60
Maine	82	18
Maryland	44	56
Massachusetts	71	29
Michigan	66	34
Minnesota	79	21
Mississippi	59	41
Missouri	69	31
Montana	78	22
Nebraska	75	25
Nevada	46	54
New Hampshire	76	24
New Jersey	66	34
New Mexico	67	33
New York	62	38
North Carolina	53	47
North Dakota	71	29
Ohio	70	30
Oklahoma	62	38
Oregon	72	28
Pennsylvania	74	26
Rhode Island	70	30
South Carolina	61	39
South Dakota	76	24
Tennessee	55	45
Texas	62	38
Utah	63	37
Vermont	85	15
Virginia	61	39
Washington	68	32
West Virginia	43	57
Wisconsin	77	23
Wyoming	81	19
RANGE:		
High (Vermont)	85	15
Low (Louisiana)	40	60

TABLE 3 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: SETTING STANDARDS FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	47%	53%
Alabama	47	53
Alaska	59	41
Arizona	60	40
Arkansas	47	53
California	64	36
Colorado	59	41
Connecticut	47	53
Delaware	39	61
Florida	37	63
Georgia	41	59
Hawaii	54	46
Idaho	53	47
Illinois	46	54
Indiana	38	62
Iowa	45	55
Kansas	51	49
Kentucky	46	54
Louisiana	45	55
Maine	63	37
Maryland	51	49
Massachusetts	40	60
Michigan	51	49
Minnesota	57	43
Mississippi	56	44
Missouri	47	53
Montana	51	49
Nebraska	48	52
Nevada	44	56
New Hampshire	52	48
New Jersey	37	63
New Mexico	43	57
New York	43	57
North Carolina	49	51
North Dakota	48	52
Ohio	40	60
Oklahoma	40	60
Oregon	68	32
Pennsylvania	39	61
Rhode Island	37	63
South Carolina	51	49
South Dakota	50	50
Tennessee	47	53
Texas	43	57
Utah	59	41
Vermont	60	40
Virginia	41	59
Washington	64	36
West Virginia	52	48
Wisconsin	48	52
Wyoming	63	37
RANGE:		
High (Oregon)	68	32
Low (Florida, New Jersey, and Rhode Island)	37	63

TABLE 4 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: DECIDING WHETHER STUDENTS ARE TRACKED INTO SPECIAL CLASSES

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	45%	55%
Alabama	47	53
Alaska	55	45
Arizona	47	53
Arkansas	44	56
California	40	60
Colorado	55	45
Connecticut	47	53
Delaware	40	60
Florida	39	61
Georgia	52	48
Hawaii	53	47
Idaho	48	52
Illinois	45	55
Indiana	45	55
Iowa	48	52
Kansas	46	54
Kentucky	53	47
Louisiana	36	64
Maine	60	40
Maryland	44	56
Massachusetts	46	54
Michigan	42	58
Minnesota	63	37
Mississippi	50	50
Missouri	42	58
Montana	55	45
Nebraska	54	46
Nevada	38	62
New Hampshire	56	44
New Jersey	40	60
New Mexico	43	57
New York	44	56
North Carolina	43	57
North Dakota	48	52
Ohio	40	60
Oklahoma	46	54
Oregon	56	44
Pennsylvania	38	62
Rhode Island	40	60
South Carolina	46	54
South Dakota	55	45
Tennessee	45	55
Texas	42	58
Utah	46	54
Vermont	56	44
Virginia	41	59
Washington	53	47
West Virginia	39	61
Wisconsin	51	49
Wyoming	57	43
RANGE:		
High (Minnesota)	63	37
Low (Louisiana)	36	64

TABLE 5 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: DESIGNING STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	43%	57%
Alabama	45	55
Alaska	53	47
Arizona	40	60
Arkansas	41	59
California	51	49
Colorado	43	57
Connecticut	61	39
Delaware	40	60
Florida	43	57
Georgia	37	63
Hawaii	32	68
Idaho	46	54
Illinois	45	55
Indiana	38	62
Iowa	41	59
Kansas	54	46
Kentucky	52	48
Louisiana	36	64
Maine	62	38
Maryland	40	60
Massachusetts	39	61
Michigan	55	45
Minnesota	48	52
Mississippi	54	46
Missouri	33	67
Montana	46	54
Nebraska	43	57
Nevada	31	69
New Hampshire	61	39
New Jersey	34	66
New Mexico	34	66
New York	38	62
North Carolina	42	58
North Dakota	37	63
Ohio	46	54
Oklahoma	82	18
Oregon	38	62
Pennsylvania	34	66
Rhode Island	30	70
South Carolina	49	51
South Dakota	53	47
Tennessee	51	49
Texas	33	67
Utah	37	63
Vermont	50	50
Virginia	34	66
Washington	48	52
West Virginia	38	62
Wisconsin	57	43
Wyoming	36	64
RANGE:		
High (Oklahoma)	82	18
Low (Rhode Island)	30	70

TABLE 6 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: SETTING PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICIES

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	34%	66%
Alabama	38	62
Alaska	45	55
Arizona	43	57
Arkansas	39	61
California	41	59
Colorado	38	62
Connecticut	33	67
Delaware	30	70
Florida	21	79
Georgia	35	65
Hawaii	37	63
Idaho	34	66
Illinois	39	61
Indiana	35	65
Iowa	37	63
Kansas	37	63
Kentucky	45	55
Louisiana	27	73
Maine	47	53
Maryland	24	76
Massachusetts	29	71
Michigan	41	59
Minnesota	45	55
Mississippi	36	64
Missouri	35	65
Montana	44	56
Nebraska	32	68
Nevada	25	75
New Hampshire	42	58
New Jersey	33	67
New Mexico	34	66
New York	36	64
North Carolina	36	64
North Dakota	43	57
Ohio	29	71
Oklahoma	37	63
Oregon	41	59
Pennsylvania	33	67
Rhode Island	31	69
South Carolina	30	70
South Dakota	49	51
Tennessee	38	62
Texas	24	76
Utah	26	74
Vermont	50	50
Virginia	30	70
Washington	36	64
West Virginia	27	73
Wisconsin	34	66
Wyoming	39	61
RANGE:		
High (Vermont)	50	50
Low (Florida)	21	79

TABLE 7 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: DECIDING SCHOOL BUDGETS

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	20%	80%
Alabama	19	81
Alaska	24	76
Arizona	18	82
Arkansas	9	91
California	35	65
Colorado	36	64
Connecticut	22	78
Delaware	21	79
Florida	20	80
Georgia	19	81
Hawaii	57	43
Idaho	17	83
Illinois	12	88
Indiana	13	87
Iowa	15	85
Kansas	13	87
Kentucky	16	84
Louisiana	10	90
Maine	29	71
Maryland	18	82
Massachusetts	29	71
Michigan	15	85
Minnesota	20	80
Mississippi	11	89
Missouri	18	82
Montana	17	83
Nebraska	19	81
Nevada	27	73
New Hampshire	32	68
New Jersey	11	89
New Mexico	15	85
New York	18	82
North Carolina	28	72
North Dakota	8	92
Ohio	14	86
Oklahoma	10	90
Oregon	29	71
Pennsylvania	14	86
Rhode Island	17	83
South Carolina	23	77
South Dakota	10	90
Tennessee	16	84
Texas	20	80
Utah	23	77
Vermont	39	61
Virginia	16	84
Washington	25	75
West Virginia	12	88
Wisconsin	29	71
Wyoming	34	66
RANGE:		
High (Hawaii)	57	43
Low (North Dakota)	8	92

TABLE 8 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: EVALUATING TEACHER PERFORMANCE

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	10%	90%
Alabama	8	92
Alaska	13	87
Arizona	17	83
Arkansas	12	88
California	8	92
Colorado	14	86
Connecticut	13	87
Delaware	8	92
Florida	6	94
Georgia	20	80
Hawaii	14	86
Idaho	7	93
Illinois	11	89
Indiana	7	93
Iowa	7	93
Kansas	10	90
Kentucky	13	87
Louisiana	8	92
Maine	14	86
Maryland	8	92
Massachusetts	11	89
Michigan	7	93
Minnesota	14	86
Mississippi	17	83
Missouri	8	92
Montana	7	93
Nebraska	9	91
Nevada	6	94
New Hampshire	11	89
New Jersey	6	94
New Mexico	8	92
New York	7	93
North Carolina	17	83
North Dakota	7	93
Ohio	11	89
Oklahoma	8	92
Oregon	10	90
Pennsylvania	7	93
Rhode Island	6	94
South Carolina	16	84
South Dakota	9	91
Tennessee	13	87
Texas	8	92
Utah	20	80
Vermont	16	84
Virginia	14	86
Washington	7	93
West Virginia	11	89
Wisconsin	9	91
Wyoming	8	92
RANGE:		
High (Georgia and Utah)	20	80
Low (Florida, Nevada, New Jersey, and Rhode Island)	6	94

TABLE 9 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: SELECTING NEW TEACHERS

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	7%	93%
Alabama	4	96
Alaska	8	92
Arizona	12	88
Arkansas	4	96
California	17	83
Colorado	20	80
Connecticut	7	93
Delaware	5	95
Florida	5	95
Georgia	3	97
Hawaii	9	91
Idaho	13	87
Illinois	4	96
Indiana	5	95
Iowa	6	94
Kansas	5	95
Kentucky	3	97
Louisiana	1	99
Maine	16	84
Maryland	4	96
Massachusetts	8	92
Michigan	7	93
Minnesota	17	83
Mississippi	4	96
Missouri	5	95
Montana	7	93
Nebraska	5	95
Nevada	5	95
New Hampshire	20	80
New Jersey	2	98
New Mexico	4	96
New York	9	91
North Carolina	4	96
North Dakota	4	96
Ohio	5	95
Oklahoma	3	97
Oregon	20	80
Pennsylvania	5	95
Rhode Island	5	95
South Carolina	4	96
South Dakota	8	92
Tennessee	3	97
Texas	4	96
Utah	10	90
Vermont	17	83
Virginia	4	96
Washington	18	82
West Virginia	4	96
Wisconsin	7	93
Wyoming	16	84
RANGE:		
High (Colorado, New Hampshire, and Oregon)	20	80
Low (Louisiana)	1	99

TABLE 10 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: SELECTING NEW ADMINISTRATORS

	INVOLVED	NOT VERY INVOLVED
ALL TEACHERS	7%	93%
Alabama	3	97
Alaska	7	93
Arizona	9	91
Arkansas	3	97
California	11	89
Colorado	11	89
Connecticut	10	90
Delaware	12	88
Florida	3	97
Georgia	4	96
Hawaii	2	98
Idaho	8	92
Illinois	5	95
Indiana	5	95
Iowa	10	90
Kansas	4	96
Kentucky	6	94
Louisiana	6	94
Maine	14	86
Maryland	4	96
Massachusetts	13	87
Michigan	8	92
Minnesota	12	88
Mississippi	5	95
Missouri	5	95
Montana	5	95
Nebraska	6	94
Nevada	1	99
New Hampshire	19	81
New Jersey	5	95
New Mexico	4	96
New York	11	89
North Carolina	4	96
North Dakota	4	96
Ohio	5	95
Oklahoma	3	97
Oregon	13	87
Pennsylvania	9	91
Rhode Island	7	93
South Carolina	3	97
South Dakota	8	92
Tennessee	4	96
Texas	3	97
Utah	4	96
Vermont	20	80
Virginia	3	97
Washington	12	88
West Virginia	2	98
Wisconsin	8	92
Wyoming	14	86
RANGE:		
High (Vermont)	20	80
Low (Nevada)	1	99

TECHNICAL NOTES

The data in this report were collected by a mailed questionnaire administered by the Wirthlin Group of McLean, Virginia. The survey instrument was mailed to 40,000 public elementary and secondary school teachers in all 50 states in the spring of 1987.

Questionnaires were returned by 21,698 teachers representing a completion rate of 54.3 percent. Elementary teachers (kindergarten through grade six) compose 29.6 percent (11,827) of the sample and secondary teachers grades 7 through 12) make up 29.1 percent (11,651). Some of the teachers (1,780) teach at both levels.

Each survey response was weighted based on the level and state of the responding teacher. The weights were calculated so that the total survey response would represent the true relative numbers of elementary and secondary teachers across the 50 states. Similarly, the responses were weighted to reflect the true proportion of teachers from the elementary and secondary levels within the state.

The maximum sampling error for this survey is less than plus or minus one percent for the total sample. The sampling variation for any given question depends on the size of the sample and the size of the percentages expressing the results.